



OHTN Cohort Study (OCS) Quarterly Update

October 2021

OCS Productivity during COVID

Since April 2021, OCS data collectors completed:

- 1180 interviews
- 802 chart reviews
- 103 new consents.

We thank our sites, data collectors, and participants for their dedication during these unpredictable times.

Making the OCS More Representative

More than 8,000 people in Ontario have contributed data to the OCS over time, with almost 5,000 still active. As part of our effort to ensure the OCS is representative of all people living with HIV in the province, we are excited to announce a new OCS site: the Lakeridge Positive Health Clinic in Oshawa. With the inclusion of this clinic, all seven HIV health regions in Ontario are now represented in the OCS. For more information about OCS sites, visit our [website](#).

Respecting Indigenous Sovereignty

After multiple stakeholder engagements, and with the approval of the OCS Governance Committee and OHTN Board, the OCS has formed an Indigenous Data Governance Circle. This Circle is responsible for reviewing OCS proposals about Indigenous People living with HIV and approve the release of Indigenous data. We welcome Jasmine Cotnam, Randy Jackson, Trevor Stratton, and Meghan Young, who will lead the Governance Circle. We are excited to have Indigenous researchers use the OCS to better understand the needs and experiences of Indigenous People living with HIV in the province.

Governance Committee Updates

In September, the OCS Governance Committee completed a recruitment for new members. We thank all applicants, and are excited to welcome three new members to the committee: Elisio Muchano, originally from Mozambique, who works as a health navigator at Elevate in Thunder Bay; Dane Record who has worked in the HIV sector in Ontario for more than 20 years and is currently the executive director at Peterborough AIDS Resource Network; and Cornel Grey, a Ph.D. candidate and a postdoctoral fellow at University of Toronto, whose research focuses on the social and sexual lives of black queer men.

We would also like to thank the members who are leaving the committee. Martin McIntosh served as the co-chair of the Governance Committee for three years. His leadership and insight have been invaluable to the study. We are extremely grateful to Mark McCallum, who served on the committee for just over six years, for his consistent support of the study. We also thank Dr. Andrea Sereda, who served over a year. Since its inception, more than 30

OCS Quick Facts

As the pandemic persists, we are analyzing how OCS participants are accessing care and services.

From January-September 2021

95% of interviewed participants had a visit with an HIV or primary care provider within the past 12 months.

73% have seen at least one specialty or ancillary provider in the past 12 months.

46% have seen a dentist

22% have seen an eye specialist

11% have seen a psychiatrist or psychologist

6% have seen a physiotherapist

67% of the 49 participants who had not seen their HIV care provider in 18 months reported it was due to the pandemic.

19% of participants visited an ASO during the past 12 months



people have served on the OCS Governance Committee. We are grateful to all committee members, current and former, who provide their time, experience and expertise to ensure that the study serves the needs of people living with HIV in Ontario.

Scientific Steering Committee Membership

The Scientific Steering Committee ensures the study operates with technical integrity and contributes novel research to the field. We are excited to welcome new members to the committee: Dr. Lance T. McCready, Associate Professor of Adult Education and Community Development and Director of the Transitional Year Programme at University of Toronto, who uses a community-based research approach to study the education, health and well-being of Black men and boys, and LGBTQ youth of color; and Dr. Sean Hillier, Assistant Professor and Research Chair in Indigenous Health Policy & One Health at York University, who leads a collaborative research program that spans the topics of aging, living with HIV and other infectious diseases, and antimicrobial resistance, all with a concerted focus on policy affecting health care access for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. We'd like to recognize all members of the Scientific Steering Committee for their commitment and contribution. Visit our [website](#) for more information about the committee.

CHES Study: OCS Sub-study Underway

As the COVID pandemic continues to evolve, it remains unclear: whether people living with HIV are at greater risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection, the virus that causes COVID-19, or of severe COVID-19; and whether COVID vaccines will be as effective for people living with HIV as they are for HIV-negative people. The **CHES** study (COVID-HIV Evaluation of Serology and Health Services) aims to fill these gaps in knowledge to inform immunization and clinical guidelines to improve patient care. This study, inspired by questions from community members about the impact of COVID-19, is guided by a dedicated 12-member HIV Community Advisory Board who bring valuable community insight to the team. The study team looks forward to collaborating with OCS Sites and working with OCS participants and the study Community Advisory Board on this project. The CHES study is funded by CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) and led by Dr. Ann Burchell at St. Michael's Hospital, Dr. Abigail Kroch at Ontario HIV Treatment Network, Dr. Curtis Cooper at Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, Dr. Marc-André Langlois at the University of Ottawa, with the support of 15 co-investigators and collaborators across Ontario.

Sharing OCS Findings

At the 2021 Fast-Track Cities Conference, the OCS presented an e-poster entitled "Coronavirus pandemic exacerbates existing inequities in addictions, poverty, health care access, and trauma for people living with HIV". See the poster and listen to the presentation [here](#).

We congratulate Nasheed Moqueet and colleagues on their recent publication, "Hepatitis C virus testing in a clinical HIV cohort in Ontario, Canada, 2000 to 2015". You can read the full publication [here](#).

The **Ontario HIV Treatment Network Cohort Study (OCS)** is an ongoing research study that collects clinical, social and behavioural information about people living with HIV (PHA) in Ontario. Participation in the study is voluntary, and all personally identifying information of study participants is removed to ensure confidentiality. The OCS was established to improve our understanding of HIV and inform HIV prevention, care and treatment strategies for people living with HIV and groups at risk of HIV infection. For more information about the OCS, please visit www.ohtn.cohortstudy.ca or email ocs@ohtn.on.ca.